

THE EPOCH TIMES

ARTS & CULTURE



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HISTORY

Beyond Valentine's Day

Some couples unite for a lifetime. "Hesperus, the Evening Star, Sacred to Lovers," 1857, by Joseph Noel Paton.

Examples of love and devotion from history

JEFF MINICK

Who can explain it, who can tell you why?

Fools can't explain it, wise men never try.

Those lines from "Some Enchanted Evening," one of the numbers in Rodgers and Hammerstein's musical "South Pacific," are speaking of love, particularly love at first sight. But are they accurate? Can love not be explained?

Let's imagine that Sam has just returned

home from a get-together with friends. While at the party, he has become smitten with a stranger, Maggie. Restless, he paces his apartment, wondering whether Maggie would consider him strange if he called her in the morning (he asked for and received her phone number) and invited her to supper for Valentine's Day.

So, who can explain this attraction? Lots of experts might give it a shot. A professor of aesthetics might credit Maggie's high cheekbones, the light in her eyes, and the slight tremor in her voice. A psychologist could

point to commonalities, the fact that both Sam and Maggie lost their mothers at an early age and enjoy listening to Bach while reading. A scientist might speculate that pheromones were the cause of Sam's instant attraction.

The truth is, no one really knows. When all is said and done, all these explanations echo what Thomas Aquinas said of his theological works: "Everything that I have written seems like straw to me compared to those things that I have seen and have been revealed to me."

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More than a thousand of John and Abigail Adams's letters to each other remain extant.



▲ "A Lover's Token," 1830, by Charles Moreau.

HISTORY

Beyond Valentine's Day

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Always in the end, the lover runs up against a conundrum—a missing piece, that “je ne sais quoi” that lies beyond the descriptive powers of language. Love is, as Winston Churchill once described Russia, “a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma.”

Beyond Beguiled

Now, let's leave Sam to the pleasures and torments of his interior debate and return to “Some Enchanted Evening,” which ends with this line: “Once you have found her, never let her go.” So arise more questions: How is that possible to never let her, or him, go? After being shot through with Cupid's arrows, how do couples stay together year after year, through good times and bad?

Here, we are on firmer ground. We can approach our grandparents and inquire as to how they made their marriage work for 50 years. We can ask our close friend how she and her husband—they seem reasonably happy but don't always see eye to eye—keep their marriage alive. We can seek out counselors or read self-help books.

Or if we wish, and if we want to stick to real-life examples, we can hop into our time machines, otherwise known as books and histories, and study some examples from the past.

I've Got Your Back

In 1909, newly married Clementine and Winston Churchill arrived at a Bristol railway station for a meet-and-greet with local party members. Upset that Churchill had opposed the vote for women, a suffragette suddenly attacked him and violently shoved

him toward the railroad track. Though Clementine favored the vote for women, she rushed into this fracas and seized Winston by his coattails, preventing him from possible injury or death on the track.

In her article “How Winston Churchill's Wife Helped Him Become a Great Statesman,” Erin Blakemore not only recounts that incident but also gives us other examples of Clementine's aid and devotion to her husband in his political battles. She remained staunchly in his camp during his wilderness period of the 1930s, when his power in Parliament was at ebb tide, always offering words of encouragement. The couple sometimes quarreled—Clementine once threw a plate of spinach at Winston in an argument



Intellectual equals, quick to defend each other, Abigail and John Adams were companions for 54 years. Smithsonian.

“How do lovers love without each other? We were always lovers.”

Frances Chesterton, after her husband's death

about money—but more often they called each other by pet names and lived together compatibly. Churchill regarded her as the key to his success in public life.

Sacrifice

In May of 1884, Ulysses Grant, commander of the Northern armies during the Civil War, who was then elected president of the United States, found himself completely broke seven years after leaving the White House, the victim of a Ponzi scheme. Between him and his wife, Julia, they had only \$210 and were heavily in debt. A few months later, Grant was diagnosed with an incurable and fatal cancer of the throat.

Though Mark Twain, a friend, had urged Grant for years to write his memoirs, he had resisted, refusing to profit from his service to his country. Now, facing death and desperate to provide for Julia and his family, he set to work, writing up to 10,000 words a day with the same determination he had shown when fighting opponents on the battlefield. After months of enormous suffering (he eventually lost the ability to speak), he completed his 366,000-word manuscript just seven days before taking his last breath.

Today, the “Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant” is regarded as one of the finest of American autobiographies. Yet it behooves us who are interested in examples of love and devotion to remember that this courageous man suffered through this agonizing ordeal not for personal glory, but to provide for his wife after his death.

We're a Team

Perhaps the best-known story about G.K. Chesterton rests on the telegram that the

notoriously absent-minded writer and speaker sent to his wife, Frances: “Am at Market Harborough. Where ought I to be?” Chesterton was a romantic regarding life. On his way from the altar to his honeymoon, for instance, he stopped and bought a glass of milk and a pistol, purchasing the latter, he said, “with a general notion of protecting her from the pirates doubtless infesting the Norfolk Broads, to which we were bound.” He was joking, of course, but for him, every day was an adventure, which often led to some confusion and mix-ups.

Fortunately, he married a level-headed woman. Frances Blogg was also a writer, but she was as well Chesterton's guide into Christianity and his “business manager, organizer, and reminder of deadlines.” Like Clementine Churchill, Frances is credited by Chesterton's biographers as crucial to his career. In the article “The Woman Beside the Man, Frances Chesterton,” Stephanie Mann writes that she “was her husband's companion and lover, muse and friend. She helped him achieve greatness.” And as Frances herself wrote to a friend, Father John O'Connor, after Chesterton's death: “How do lovers love without each other? We were always lovers.”

Mutual Interests

Sharing a passion can deepen this sense of being a team.

Perhaps the greatest example can be seen in Marie and Pierre Curie. A love of science bound them together, and their long hours of work in a laboratory not only produced monumental achievements in science but also deepened their love for each other. When in 1903 they won a Nobel Prize in physics for their work in radiation, Marie at first went unrecognized until Pierre insisted her name be added to that commendation. She then became the first woman to receive that award.

And three years later, after Pierre died as the result of an accident involving a horse-drawn carriage, the grieving Marie honored his memory by taking his place at the Sor-

bonne, the first female professor to teach there, and by creating a laboratory in his name. “Pierre had dedicated his life to his dream of science,” Marie wrote. “He felt the need of a companion who could live his dream with him.”

He found that companion in Marie.

Whatever the activity—hiking, gardening, reading, starting up a business together—shared enterprises often make couples friends as well as partners.

Everlasting Friendship

In the marriage of John and Abigail Adams, we find all of the above qualities. While John was frequently absent from home attending various meetings or on missions abroad (both during and after the American Revolution), his stout-hearted wife, Abigail, operated their farm, saw to the education of their children, and wrote a flood of letters giving her slant on the politics of the moment.

More than a thousand of their letters to each other remain extant. Here, they frequently addressed each other as “Dearest friend.” Intellectual equals, quick to defend each other, they were companions for 54 years. After Abigail's death from typhoid fever in 1818, Adams wrote, “I wish I could lay down beside her and die too.”

Husband and wife, yes, but also two lifelong companions walking the path side by side. Like the others mentioned above, John and Abigail fell in love, and they stayed in love until the day they left this earth.

In a culture such as ours, with its emphasis on personal freedom and self-satisfaction, potential suitors like our fictional Sam, and the rest of us as well, might learn a thing or two about true love by acquainting ourselves with these stories of sacrifice, devotion, and intimacy from the past.

Jeff Minick lives and writes in Front Royal, Virginia. He is the author of two novels, “Amanda Bell” and “Dust on Their Wings,” and two works of nonfiction, “Learning as I Go” and “Movies Make the Man.”



A love of science bound Pierre and Marie Curie together, shown here circa 1903.



Clementine Churchill in 1915. Once while traveling with a small party, her husband was insulted. She abruptly left the room, packed her bags, and sailed for home. U.S. Library of Congress's Prints and Photographs division.



Winston Churchill circa 1900. He proposed to Clementine on Aug. 11, 1908, in a small summer house known as the Temple of Diana on the estate of Blenheim Palace. They married on Sept. 12. Imperial War Museums.



G.K. Chesterton and his beloved wife, Frances.

REWIND, REVIEW, AND RE-RATE

Jon Voight's Searing Portrait of a Doting Dad

RUDOLPH LAMBERT FERNANDEZ

An over-the-hill boxer, Billy "The Champ" Flynn (Jon Voight) treasures his 8-year-old son, Timothy Joseph or T.J. (Ricky Schroder), while battling his vices of gambling and drinking.

Estranged for seven years on account of her careerism and now remarried, the boy's mother, Annie (Faye Dunaway), suddenly tries to get T.J. back into her life, propped up by opulence that Billy can only dream of providing their boy.

In turn, T.J. worships Billy and idolizes his boxing exploits years after they've faded. Reassuringly for Billy, T.J. is also unmoved by the allure of Annie's affluence. Still, desperate to hold on to his boy, Billy gives up gambling and drinking. He hopes that his comeback boxing match will rake in big money and secure the boy's future with him, rather than with his, until now uncaring, mother.

His child's utter surrender to his care, soothes and scares Billy at the same time. But it also fills him with a fiery sense of duty, not just to do things right but to do the right thing, especially when T.J. is so irrevocably dependent on him.

Director Franco Zeffirelli's film is a remake of the 1931 film. Unfairly, many ridicule Zeffirelli's movie for its unabashed display of emotion, but his melodrama here is far from misplaced. Have they seen an 8-year-old, incurably attached to a beloved parent, being torn from him or her? What would they expect? Monastic restraint?! In his debut film, Schroder (himself about T.J.'s age at the time) doesn't hold back any shade of feeling, whether it's confusion, loss, pain, guilt, regret, fear, joy, expectation, or triumph.

Dunaway is the perfect foil, less given to open (or easy) displays of emotion. She rarely laughs or cries, moves slowly or stays perfectly still. In a scene where she herself is overcome with emotion and kneels to welcome T.J., she waits for him to fall into her arms, fighting every impulse to embrace him first.

It's the picture of a woman who prefers to love and be loved on her terms only. She badly wants to comfort him but waits to see if he wants as badly to be comforted by her.

T.J. worships Billy and idolizes his boxing exploits years after they've faded.

'The Champ'

Director:
Franco Zeffirelli

Starring:
Jon Voight, Ricky Schroder, Faye Dunaway

MPAA Rating:
PG

Running Time:
2 hours, 2 minutes

Release Date:
April 4, 1979

★★★★☆



MOVIESTILLSDB

Voight Valiant but Vulnerable

Voight stays in character, striding across the screen like a colossus, helped by Zeffirelli's shots from below that render The Champ louder and larger than he is.

Screenwriters Frances Marion and Walter Newman envisioned The Champ as a mercurial character, whether gambling, drinking, or squabbling. So, of course, Billy is larger-than-life, literally flinging himself in every direction. It's because he's so temperamental, so "over the top," that uber-cultured Annie struggled to stay with him in the first place.

With no resources to speak of, he squanders money on a horse, merely to please T.J. Is he not thinking things through? He's throwing down the dice in life, just as he does in a gambling gig. He runs more than he walks. He shouts more than he talks. It's why he rushes into a big-time match even years after being out of action, merely on a

whim that he'll hit the jackpot and be able to afford T.J. the comfort and schooling he's being denied.

In the very first scene, an old-timer recalls how he'd won in the past by betting big on Billy, but warns the ex-boxer against talk of a comeback: You've been away too long to expect the magic to simply return.

While listening, Billy spots a fly or bug on his left forearm, snatches it with his right hand, solemnly bunches it in his fist for a second, then opens his palm to watch it fly up and away. Through that blink-and-you-miss-it snippet, Voight marvelously captures the essence of The Champ: saint and sinner rolled into one. You may not realize it, but from that moment on, you'll find it easier to love the saint, harder to hate the sinner.

Rudolph Lambert Fernandez is an independent writer who writes on pop culture.

Billy Flynn (Jon Voight) has big hopes for a comeback, in "The Champ."

TRUTH and TRADITION

In Our Own Words

Uplifting, Inspiring, and Useful



“Family life has a tremendous impact on individuals and society as a whole.”

Barbara Danza
Contributing Editor

Dear Epoch VIP,

I'm so happy you're receiving The Epoch Times in your home. I'm Barbara Danza, a contributing editor. You may have seen my articles in the Life & Tradition section or perhaps your children have discovered the page I edit: For Kids Only.

This is pretty much a dream job for me. Between interviewing knowledgeable and inspiring experts and influencers, diving into research about subjects I'm passionate about, or joyfully putting together a special page for our younger readers to enjoy, I feel so fortunate to play a small part in what The Epoch Times is bringing to the world. That I get to do this while taking care of my own family at home and homeschooling my children is truly a blessing.

Most of my work focuses on family life. Though it seems traditional family values have been under attack for some time in our culture, **I see more families searching for ways to simplify their lives, preserve the magic of childhood, pass on family traditions, provide their children a solid education and ground their family life in the values they hold most dear.**

Families face many issues today—from inadequacies in our educational systems to an increasing array of alternatives, from the frantic overscheduling of our lives to a trend toward simplicity, from the onslaught of disturbing media messages to more focus on what's good and true.

Family life has a tremendous impact on individuals and society as a whole. There are endless topics to explore. Should you have one you'd like me to cover, or if you have feedback you'd like to offer about my work, please send it on. I'd love to hear from you.

My first article in The Epoch Times was published back in its early days in 2005. It has been astonishing to watch our media company grow and see what a deep need it fulfills for our ever expanding audience. I feel lucky to be part of an enterprise that is giving so many people, as they often put it, what they've been searching for.

I hope you enjoy this week's edition of the paper, and that in addition to being well-informed about current events, you find ideas that are uplifting, inspiring, and useful in your own life.

We have only just begun. **Please help us continue to expand our reach by sharing The Epoch Times with your family and friends.**

Thank you for reading, for coming onboard as a subscriber and for supporting the work we do. Knowing that there are people like you who value high standards of journalism and traditional American values inspires us all to keep going.

In Truth and Tradition,

Barbara Danza
The Epoch Times

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